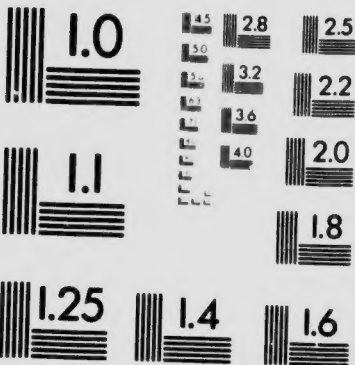


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SPEECH

OF THE

HONOURABLE THE PREMIER

IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA ON MARCH 20, 1916

In the Debate upon the Address in Reply to the Speech
from the Throne

VICTORIA COLONIST, MARCH 26th, 1916

On rising to speak the Premier was greeted with applause. Mr. Bowser said:

Mr. Speaker, I feel that perhaps I cannot start my opening remarks without congratulating the honorable mover and seconder of the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, upon the very lucid argument which they advanced, and which appealed to every business man of the House.

I am sure I am only voicing the regret of the whole House in stating how much we will miss the mover, Mr. Thomson, after this session, as he has decided to retire from public life, but I am sure it will not be long before the City of Victoria will again force him into the public service of the country. (Applause).

I wish to congratulate the honorable senior member for Cariboo for the excellent address he gave in extolling the virtues of that portion of the Province, which is now about to be tapped by a railway running through the backbone of that country, and which will do more for British Columbia than any other railway which we have seen fit to assist.

In connection with the old constituency of Cariboo, I regret that under the Redistribution Act that comes into force at the close of this session, it will lose one of its members, in the person of Dr. Callanan, a man who has not been heard, it is true, very often on the floor of this House, but has

given signal interest and service to the constituency of Cariboo.

Alludes to Opposition

I wish to congratulate the House on receiving back on its floor the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition. We have for some time in this House been handicapped in not having the Liberal party represented here; and it has been very often a question as to who was really the Opposition, so far as the Government was concerned. The hon. member for Newcastle has done very well, it is true, during the last few years in carrying on the onerous duties—of course, being very much handicapped, naturally, in having so much work to undertake, and particularly where the House has had such a large majority against him. We must all appreciate the excellent work he has done in that regard. I can say for the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, that we have known him before in this House since I came here in 1903, and we have all known the great interest he has taken in the public affairs of the country; and I know on this occasion he will not default in the arduous labors upon which he has entered. And the best wish that I can voice on behalf of the Government is that he may long remain in his position as Leader of the Opposition. (Laughter and applause).

His Own Constituency

I also wish to offer congratulations to the hon. member for Vancouver (Mr.

Macdonald). I was disappointed, naturally, in my own constituency acting as it did on the 26th of February last, but I have always bowed with becoming grace, as I should to the decision of the people with respect to any man in the public service, in whatever constituency. I have always found the people of Vancouver very reasonable at all times. If they had not felt they had good reason to change their views on political questions for the time being, they would, of course, not have spoken in this most uncertain sound by returning my colleague by such a large majority.

I remember some time ago, in discussing the future of the Liberal party in Vancouver with a Liberal friend of mine, as he asked in a very confidential mood, as to what the future of the Liberal party might possibly be, he told me then he thought that if some man would come to the front in the city of Vancouver—and being an observing man he naturally suggested one of my own profession—he thought that he might have the opportunity in the years to come after being in the House, and when the political wheel turned and there came to be a new administration, that perhaps in ten years he might find himself in charge on the right hand of the Speaker. I now congratulate the hon. member for Vancouver for having started his first year in the decade. (Laughter and applause.)

The Leadership

Now there has been since our last Parliament a decided change on this side of the House in connection with the leadership. We all regret that this country has lost the services of one of the most estimable, and one of the most brilliant native sons that British Columbia ever produced. It is questionable whether in the future, in our time at least, or perhaps for some centuries to come, British Columbia will ever produce another man of such attainments and natural ability as Sir Richard McBride.

And I can only express the views of those on this side of the House, and those on the other side, I am sure, and the people of the country as well, that it is our unanimous wish, that in the new position he has taken in the City of London he will be as successful as he has been in his undertakings here. (Applause.)

Some very prominent members of the Opposition have spread broadcast the statement that I have forced this action myself for my own political aggrandisement. Any man who knows the position Sir Richard McBride has held in this Province knows that such a thing would be impossible; any person who is acquainted at all with Sir Richard McBride and knows his strength of character, knows it would take a man of a great deal more strength than myself to undertake to force Sir Richard McBride out of his position in the House if he was not willing to go. Those who have known him intimately, know that for the last few years he had made up his mind to go to London, the great centre of the Empire, and probably fill a mission later on which will not be criticized, and achieve a career of greater value to the future of this Empire than he could achieve by remaining here as leader of the Government.

The Agent-General

He can fill the position of Agent-General with perhaps greater ability than any other man has ever done; we all know the entry of the Premier is well received in London and he himself was persona grata to the Imperial authorities. His work is there. And when we need friends to help us out in Imperial matters, there is no man to whom we can go with greater confidence in obtaining the results we need than to Sir Richard McBride as our Agent-General. (Applause.)

I have nothing to say, except in passing, of our retiring Agent-General, because this matter will be brought up in the course of the debate, when the bill respecting it is laid on the table. Many years, over half a century, he has been in public life in this country; he has made an estimable Agent-General. But with growing years he felt that perhaps some of us who are interested in the future of British Columbia might perhaps prefer a younger and more competent man to represent the Province there. And as a result of his good services for many years, I think that British Columbia will only be doing what is just and its duty to Mr. Turner in giving him the allowance to which I have already referred. (Applause.)

"The Member for Newcastle"

Now the honorable member for Newcastle was the first to speak on the de-

bate on the King's Speech; and I congratulate him on his new connection, because I suppose every man making a decided change in public life must at least have his own approval, and he must look forward to the future with a great deal of confidence after having joined the Liberal party. I had never thought it was possible for the honorable member for Newcastle to have come in such close contact with the Liberal party, particularly when one remembers the speeches that he has already delivered in this House.

Mr. Williams—I cannot let that statement go; for my part I would like to contradict it at the present time, because it would seem like admitting it if I were to allow it to pass.

Hon. Mr. Bowser—I was only referring to a speech which he made in the City of Vancouver, which was properly reported, I presume, in the Liberal newspaper there, in which he said that, having joined the Socialist party, he joined the Liberal party for the time being. If the honorable gentleman says that is not correct, I can accept his statement. But that shows that while still with the Liberal party, and more or less in their confidence, he is rather ashamed of admitting it publicly. (Applause.)

I wish to quote as follows from a letter he wrote to a fellow Socialist on April 17, 1913:

"In British Columbia, until recent years, whenever the workers' candidate seemed to have a fighting chance, the Liberal party nominated no straight party candidate. Instead of this, with the cunning of the fox, and the unscrupulousness of the hyena, they selected a man who had attained some prominence in the ranks of labor, someone whose vanity or cupidity was stronger than his manhood, and at the disposal of this thing, they placed the Liberal machine and the funds to carry on a campaign."

An Estimate of the Liberal Party

I believe that, on account of the statement he has made, he was giving a true description of his own present position with the Liberal party. Later on, in the same letter, he said:

"Apparently, our experience is to be yours. Toryism fights in the open with a spiked club. Liberalism steals up in the guise of a friend, and by purchase, by bribery, by fraud and by duplicity, endeavors to defeat us."

Now, the question is, if the honorable member for Newcastle has not thrown in his lot with the Liberal party, he so estimated the Liberal party—though to-day he denies he is a Liberal.

And if he regards Toryism as he says, I am sorry the honorable member for Nanaimo is not here, because I would like to ask him whether in this purchase, he himself has sort of been thrown in the "purchase" by the honorable member for Newcastle as a political prize package. (Applause.)

He goes on to say: "If there is any affinity between Liberalism and Labor, you should be able to detect it by the legislation of the Alberta Government in recent years. What is the record? If Liberalism thinks that Labor is entitled to representation in governmental assemblies, how comes it that of all the number of members appointed to the Canadian Senate during the fifteen years of Liberal rule, not one representative of labor has been appointed?" He is frank, he hopes to be a Senator. (Laughter and applause.) He is complaining that no Labor man has been made a Senator. Now, Mr. Speaker, you can see the reason for the connection between him and the Liberal party. (Laughter and applause.)

Another Quotation

Then he says: "There is another side to this matter. Liberalism cannot pull this trick through single handed. The beginning of the whole perfidious scheme is a Judas in our own ranks, someone whom Labor has trusted must become a renegade, must prove false to his own class. As time goes on the struggle for bread grows more bitter. The unscrupulous among us, finding it so, instead of doing a man's share to end the struggle they sell themselves to the devil, (does the hon. the Leader of the Opposition represent the devil?), and their class to a deeper hell of slavery, in the hope that as a price for their perfidy they may be assisted to climb out of the pit. Whether corporation thug, or agency spy, scab or harlot, that lends himself to divide the workers on election day by masquerading in the garb of a Liberal-Labor candidate, all are the shameless tools used by the House of Plunder."

Now this apathy applies to the honorable member for Newcastle, because I understand that part of the deal is that there is to be no Liberal candidate nominated

in the constituency of Newcastle, so that that statement in his letter implies that he is in this category, "whether corporation thug, or agency spy, scab or harlot, that lends himself to divide the workers on election day by masquerading in the garb of a Liberal-Labor candidate, all are the shameless tools used by The House of Plunder." (Loud applause.)

Mr. Williams—Liberal-Labor candidate, it says.

Hon. Mr. Bowser—It is the Liberal-Labor candidates you refer to. That surely is a good description of his for the constituency of Newcastle to think over in the coming election! Now the letter goes on, "ploughing the sand" is the figure of speech used to denote useless labor, but 'ploughing the sand' is no more hopeless than looking for good results from a scheme born in treachery." (Applause.)

Agricultural Aid Act

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to prolong the sufferings of the hon. member for Newcastle any further.

He spoke in his address of the Agricultural Aid Act and says that there is no cheap money. We introduced the Agricultural Act and placed it on the statute books last year, with the understanding that when the financial markets are in a position to receive suggestions as to purchase of bonds of this nature at a sufficiently low rate of interest so that the money can be reloaned cheaply to the farmers, in that case we would undertake to float them.

Unfortunately, owing to the conditions because of the war, and the great demands for money from the British and French Governments, as well as the Canadian Government, and the various provinces and municipalities, it has been impossible up to date to float the agricultural loan at the rate that we would like; but I am in the position to state now that everything is much more favorable; we are now calling for tenders for a loan, which will be in a few days, for a million dollars, which we are confident that we can borrow at a rate less than 6 per cent—and we will have to charge 1 per cent for administration. We can lend this money for 30 or 36 years, to be repaid by the farmer in such a way that it will not fall too hard upon him. We regret exceedingly the money is not at our dis-

posal at a cheaper rate of interest; but under the circumstances we must do the best we can, because we cannot afford to wait until the war is over, for that may be a long time.

Non-Controversial Legislation

With reference to the statement made the other day in the debate as to the length of life of this Legislature, the honorable the leader of the Opposition seems to be very much upset because I have given to the Legislature the result of the negotiations between myself and the Opposition. I do not wish to refer to this at any length, except to say the Honorable leader of the Opposition stated that he considered it was a confidential discussion that took place; and that it was an arrangement of one gentleman with another.

I agree that we were gentlemen, and we ought to remain gentlemen still. But we are gentlemen serving the public of this country. He, in this discussion, was the leader of the Opposition, and I was the leader of the Government, and we were simply discussing public matters; and if anything had taken place in that discussion which would have been of political advantage to the Honorable leader of the Opposition, or to his party, he would have been the first to make use of it on the floor of this Legislature. There was nothing of a secret nature, or confidential nature; it was simply a discussion of public business, as to what I would suggest would be done in the way of non-controversial legislation, and a statement on his part as to how far he would go in meeting me. One of the propositions which the Honorable leader of the Opposition suggested, at that interview, was that the Agricultural Aid Act would not be brought into force at this session, and not until after the election. He evidently thought he was going to receive some political advantage, that this bill would be put over the session, and then his party might come in and would receive the benefit of having put it in force.

Mr. Brewster—The honorable gentleman's remark is not borne out by the fact; it is impossible for me to sit without protesting that that is not correct.

Opposition Tactics

Hon. Mr. Bowser—Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to bandy words across the floor of the Legislature; I am giving

my view of what took place, and my friend is at perfect liberty to say it is not according to his view. Amongst the statements he made was that the Agricultural Aid Act should not go into force. He told me that he had taken the act, and that he had found by checking it up that there were 36 appointments our Government would have to make by order-in-council, when that act was brought into force. My public time is too important for me to look into any act and find out how many men are to be appointed to inferior positions. The time of the Premier is too important to the country to admit of his looking into an act to see what patronage there is to dispose of. For the purpose of getting thirty-six appointments to political hangers-on, of which he has hundreds of them today waiting, he was willing to set back the farmers of this country a year by holding off the agricultural loans. (Applause.) For a mere political advantage. All the farmers who are attempting to borrow money on their places, and honestly develop their farms, on account of the suggestion of the Honorable Leader of the Opposition, the Agricultural Aid Act was not to be brought into force to allow them to do this, merely because the Liberal party wanted to make thirty-six minor appointments in connection with it. (Applause.)

Mr. Brewster—Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a thing to the honorable gentleman, and that is this, that we did mention the Agricultural Aid Act, and it was pointed out to him that the Opposition, or anyone else, could not have anything to do with it, as it was already past this House, and only required the signature of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Now Minister of Agriculture

Hon. Mr. Bowser—I will not deal at any further length on this, because it is true that statement was made, as I have stated, and I want to ask the honorable gentleman whether he suggests I dreamt about these thirty-six appointments, or did he make the suggestion?

My friend referred next to shipping. I will not go into that today, because later on I will make a statement as to the policy of the Government with regard to this legislation.

The honorable member for Newcastle also referred to the question of the new Minister of Agriculture. It has been for some time my opinion, having had

considerable experience in that department, that there should be a Minister to devote his entire time to that department. And after I took office on December 15, I stated to the people then, in my manifesto, that it was the intention of the Government to divorce the Agricultural Department from the Department of Finance; and, as a result, in the King's Speech we have also made the same suggestion, and legislation will be brought down to that effect.

The honorable member for Newcastle referred to labor affairs at Cumberland. There is no one that regrets more than the Government the conditions at Cumberland owing to the strike, and afterwards that orders for coal did not materialize, and it threw a great deal of men out of work. The Government did a great deal by relief work in assisting those men, throughout a year of hard times, and later on we found there was a chance to get them employment in the Province of Alberta, and the Government advanced the money at their own suggestion—a large part of which has been repaid—to take them down there and obtain positions for them through our relief officer, in the Province of Alberta. It is to be regretted of course that circumstances were such that white men had to leave this Province and go to another in order to make a living for themselves and their families.

As to Retrenchment

Now, I wish to speak for a few moments on the remarks made by the Honorable Leader of the Opposition that there was no sign of retrenchment in the Speech from the Throne. It was not new when he stated it, because I have heard it so often before. Every time I took up a newspaper and had these speeches before me, I saw the statement with reference to retrenchment; so familiar had it become that at the beginning of a sentence I could understand what would be said. He says there is no retrenchment being made in this time of retrenchment.

There is no Government that realizes more than we do that it is a time for retrenchment. We are like everybody else; we have made mistakes, as we have made mistakes in our private business. There was for a time a period of financial enthusiasm and speculation which we all now regret. But there is this to be said, that if we had not gone along and followed in the procession with that feeling of enthusiasm which

was then going on, the people of this country would have said we were "flies on the wheel," that we were not appreciating the proper position of British Columbia in connection with her development. And, as I have mentioned, we did make mistakes; we may have become too enthusiastic. But when we found the financial depression, commencing in 1913, and continuing after the outbreak of the war in 1914, this Government proceeded in every possible way to cut down its public expenditure. My friend has only to go to the public accounts, which have already been tabled at this session, for 1914 and 1915, to see the retrenchment we made in connection with the various public works and other disbursements in this Province.

What Government Saved

In the fiscal year of 1914-15, we saved \$1,590,000 over the expenditures that had been estimated—over a million and a half was saved by this Government. That is only one point. I wish to draw your attention to this, in order to show that statements made here or elsewhere have not been made correctly in that connection. (Applause.)

My friend also stated that we gave railway aid up to \$30,000,000 for the Pacific Great Eastern Railway Company. He is entirely wrong about that. It may be that he does not know, he may not have been in a position to find out, and he has never asked the question. But, as a matter of fact, we have never given \$30,000,000 to the Pacific Great Eastern; the only portion we have yet issued aid to by way of guarantee is from Vancouver to Fort George, which amounted to \$18,000,000. The Peace River section we have issued no bonds on, because it was impossible to float the bonds, and the work of that section has been delayed. But as shows the reckless, rash statements made by the leader of the Opposition—not only in the public elections in this country, but in this Legislature, where he should be more careful.

Mr. Brewster—Is the aid not given?

How Facts Were Distorted

Hon. Mr. Bowser—It has not been issued; and my friend makes the statement which affects our credit in this country, when everyone at this time should be very careful. In this partic-

ular instance he is out \$12,000,000—and it is on a par with a great many of the statements which he has made in criticism in this House.

He says that last year we shipped out of this Province \$30,000,000, which was sent out for food which was consumed by the people of this country. What are the facts? In 1914 the total agricultural food imports were \$25,199,135; but let us bring that back to the year of which he speaks, 1915, the total agricultural imports in that year were \$16,402,561—a reduction of \$8,797,564 from the year before. And still my friend will say we shipped out last year in money \$30,000,000, when, as a matter of fact, it is only \$16,000,000. He is simply out \$13,500,000. And this is on a par with similar statements he has been making broadcast all over the country—not only in this Legislature, but in the by-elections, and also in the Eastern provinces. Now, this fortunately has had no effect on the financial people of the East; they take the honorable gentleman's statements at their proper value. It only shows you that in the agricultural imports alone in one year he has made a mistake of thirteen and a half millions, and any independent, fair-minded, honest-thinking elector of this Province must see he is not able to place any dependence on the statements of the leader of the Opposition. (Applause.)

Figures on Population

He says the population is decreasing. Here he is a wise man. Of course the population is decreasing—owing to the thousands we have sent to fight our wars of the Empire with our Allies. (Applause.) This has decreased our population. I will give my friend a few more statements in this connection. The population of British Columbia from 1900 to 1914 nearly trebled. We increased from the small population of 178,657 in 1900, to the large population of 500,000 in 1914. Now this is on a par with other statements he has made—that the population has decreased, without giving the actual figures, which show you in this connection that we trebled during that time. (Applause.)

Now I would like to ask my friend—he is appealing to the franchises of the people, to the confidence of the people and is asking to be placed in a position on this side of the House—I would like

to know what his policy is. Have you ever heard a single statement made by him, either at the elections or in the discussion which has taken place on this floor, at any time, one single suggestion of what his policy would be? What does he propose to do as to shipbuilding? What does he propose to do as to agricultural aid? What will he do with the returned soldiers? What will he do to complete that great railway, perhaps the best railway we will ever have so far as developing this Province. What will he do to bring about the early construction of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, which diverts freight and passengers from the Grand Trunk Pacific to the City of Vancouver, which traverses, as has been suggested by Sir Richard McBride, the great fertile hinterland of British Columbia. I would like to ask him what he proposes to do under the serious financial condition to effect the early completion of that railroad. Let us hear less scolding and more definite statements as to a future policy. (Applause.)

Those By-elections

The honorable member for Vancouver City made his initial bow in connection with the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, last week; and I congratulate him upon his effort in that regard. He spoke of the by-elections, which I have already referred to. He has taken considerable credit to himself; and in fact it has gone so far that people state they have actually picked out the chairs on this side of the House which they consider most comfortable for themselves. (Laughter.)

But they may be counting their "chickens before they are hatched." There are many reasons for the results of the by-elections, not only in this city, but in Vancouver. The people in both cities wanted an Opposition in this Legislature. I have not a word to say against that. You can understand why they think an Opposition would be necessary. Independent as the voter of this country is, he is rather at this time affected by the result which is seen to have taken place in other Provinces, the unfortunate and wholly unjustifiable conditions of graft which took place in the Province of Manitoba would have awakened thoughts in any independent elector. And then when you come further West, and come to the Provinces of

Saskatchewan and Alberta, you find a similar state of affairs existing under two Liberal Governments—members of the Government absconding, and officials in high positions in departments now being hunted for in foreign countries; and with these results taking place in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, it is only natural that a strong suggestion should be made that an examination should be had into the public affairs of this country, that certain people of British Columbia may feel that possibly under the Conservative regime in British Columbia there was "something rotten in the state of Denmark."

Vancouver's Verdict

And as a result, my own people in the City of Vancouver have shown that so far as this election is concerned, notwithstanding the excellent standing of the Honorable Minister of Public Works in the City of Vancouver, they proposed to put in the Opposition in the Legislature a man who will delve into public affairs in this country, and see whether charges of a similar kind are correct or not. I have, as I have already said, no opposition to offer to that. We have them here now; we expect them to do their duty, the public of this country expect them to do their duty, the citizens of Vancouver expect them to do their duty; and if their duty is not done, and if they do not show that we are corrupt, then I will have this to say on the hustings, when the next election comes around in the City of Vancouver, that the situation was not alarming as suggested; and I think then you will find a entirely different result, when the election is over, in that city. (Applause.)

Now, the followers of my friends across the floor of the House, not in the House, it is true, but in public meetings, and privately with their friends and mine throughout the country, have been going over this Province "shedding crocodile tears" over the state of my health. They have stated that I am in a dying condition; that I am not fit, that I am not in condition to lead any party—with the result that they hope they are going to wear down perhaps the confidence that the country and my party may have in me. I am glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am neither in a dying condition physically

nor politically. (Applause.) When the time comes—

Mr. Brewster—Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, that statement that members on this side of this House have stated that the Honorable Premier is dying physically is absolutely erroneous; of course it is the opinion of the general public that he is in that condition politically.

Public Business Must Go On

Hon. Mr. Bowser—I did not say my friend made the statement but I say his followers are making it, and they are making it all over the country; they are making it in my own constituency, and also in the City of Victoria.

Now the suggestion was made in the speech of the Honorable Leader of the Opposition, and also the honorable member for Vancouver, that we should pass the necessary supply, and then proceed to the country. I am not in a position to make today any definite statement as to what legislation will be brought down; shortly I will be able to take the House into my confidence in that respect. But I may say, as the fiscal year expires on the 31st of March, it is most important that we should have supply by that date to go on with the public business of the country. The political ambitions of the Opposition must not stop the public business from being carried on. We propose to bring on our Supply Bill as early as possible, and properly deal with the business of the country. And it is not our intention to obstruct my friends opposite in any way. They can do the obstruction if they think it necessary for their particular object. We will give them all the time necessary—except that the public of the country expects that the public business is to be carried on. So that from now on we will give our attention to supply, in order that his Majesty may have all that is needed for the first part of the next fiscal year, from April on.

One of the statements the honorable member for Vancouver made in the by-election—some of these statements I hope he will take the responsibility of making as a member of this Legislature—for it is much harder to make rash statements here than it is on the hustings when it is not sure whether you will be returned or not—one of the statements he made was that for years

there had been no meetings of the public accounts committee.

Mr. Macdonald: What is the Honorable Premier quoting from?

Hon. Mr. Bowser: I am always quoting from the bible of the Liberal party—"The Sun."

Mr. Macdonald: I have not the slightest recollection of making such a statement.

Hon. Mr. Bowser: I will have to accept the honorable gentleman's statement on that. I have not "The Sun" here, but I think I could hunt up the statement made by him in that connection. He says he has no recollection of it. I quite understand that he might not have such recollection, as to statements he made during the campaign, as he made so many reckless statements during that contest. (Applause).

Public Accounts Committee

Now, from 1899 to 1907 there were no meetings of the public accounts committee. The public had during that term our late defeated candidate—John Oliver, as a member of this House; and if it had been considered necessary by the Liberal party from 1899 to 1907 to have a meeting of the public accounts committee, Mr. Oliver, the honorable member for Delta, would have been the first to suggest it. In 1908 there were three meetings held. (Applause).

In 1908 we had three meetings, as I said; in 1910 we had one meeting, in 1911 one meeting; and then we had the election of 1912, and in the following year, the honorable member for Newcastle, and the honorable member for Nanaimo were representing the Opposition. We had eight meetings in 1913, five in 1914, and the honorable member for Newcastle was so satisfied with what he had seen from delving into the public accounts, that he wished nothing further; so in 1915, the last session, there was only one meeting. So that if you total it up, Mr. Speaker, you will find in the last three years we have had 14 meetings of the public accounts committee, as compared with six in the previous 12 years. So that, so far as the Government is concerned, we have had no suggestion that more were thought necessary. (Applause).

Length of Session

With regard to the statements I have made about supply being voted and put through as early as possible, I wish it

to be understood by the Opposition and the country generally, that this does not mean that this Legislature is going to be brought to an early conclusion. The honorable, my colleague from Vancouver, has made the statement, according to "The Sun" newspaper, that this was the "most corrupt Government in Canada." Now, as a gentleman of some standing in the legal profession, he must have some fact on which to base that statement in order to make it; and now I propose to give him all the chance he wants to make good in that regard. (Applause.) The opportunity will be given him if we have to stay here until the first day of June; I and my followers will sit here until my friend makes good the statement he has made, if he can. (Applause.) There will be no obstacles thrown in connection with the fullest investigation. We are in favor of all investigations because we have nothing to hide. If there is anything corrupt about this Government, or about any of the ministers by whom I am surrounded; if there is anything corrupt in connection with any deputy or official of this Government, I am the man who wants to know it. And I promise this House now, and I promise the country, if there is any corruption shown I will be the first man to remove from office every man found guilty of any such offence. (Applause.)

Liberals With Liquor Interests

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I leave my colleague, the honorable member for Vancouver, I wish to speak with reference to a statement made by my colleague, Dr. McGuire, in a very able speech delivered last week. Unfortunately I did not hear it, but I have heard from other members as well as from the newspapers, of his very excellent address. Unfortunately, some of the members on this side of the House do not speak often enough, and it would be better, in my opinion, for the public business if there was more debate done on the right hand of the Speaker.

I regret the fact that my colleague from Vancouver has retired from public life; but it will not be long before the public will see to it that his abilities are much better used in connection with the public affairs of the country than in private business. (Applause.)

Now, the statement has been made

that the honorable member for Vancouver had made a suggestion with some weight on account of his standing as a prominent member of the legal profession, of a way out for the hotel people, out of this prohibition referendum. The language used in that connection is found in the Province newspaper, under date of Wednesday, March 15th; and this is the interview: "What happens if this Legislature passes a prohibition measure now?"

"After it is submitted to the people, and immediately before it becomes operative the liquor men may move before the courts for an injunction to prevent the law coming into effect on the ground that the Legislature was defunct at the time the bill was passed. They could delay prohibition by carrying the constitutional point to the court of appeals, and if successful there, could force the prohibitionists to start all over again, and thereby gain another year at least before the law could come into effect." Now did you ever see a more Jesuitical statement from any man than that?

Scheme to Beat Prohibition

Here is the legal representative, the legal constitutional representative of the Opposition stating to the liquor men that they can beat prohibition for a year. There never was anything plainer than that; the honorable member for Vancouver is to be credited for having brought that to our attention. My friend, I understand, contradicted the suggestion that any such statement as that was made. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take you into a little private history. The gentleman that received that suggestion from the honorable member for Vancouver was Mr. J. S. Cowper, who is one of the representatives of The Province newspaper, and a Liberal candidate in Vancouver, and Mr. Cowper has gone since, I presume, to every hotel man in the City of Vancouver, and said: "Here, our constitutional lawyer, Mr. Macdonald, has stated that you can beat prohibition by applying for an injunction and prevent the law coming into effect."

Mr. Macdonald—Mr. Speaker, I have not had any discussion with Mr. Cowper on that matter since that alleged interview was published; I stated in the House that I had not given any interview to any reporter of The Province newspaper; and that statement still stands.

Hon. Mr. Bowser—Does my friend deny that he saw Mr. Cowper, and that this thing took place?

Mr. Macdonald—Certainly I saw Mr. Cowper afterwards.

Hon. Mr. Bowser—I am not asking if you saw him afterwards, but before this appeared in the press. My honorable friend from Vancouver brought it up and Mr. Macdonald denied it in the House; and then Mr. Cowper, in order to protect himself and the hotel people, has another representative of the paper interview the honorable member for Vancouver on March 17 in respect of the statement he made in the House, that he never had this interview; and this is the language used: "I certainly did not understand—"

Mr. Macdonald—Are you attributing that language to me?

Hon. W. J. Bowser—Yes.

Mr. Macdonald—I say I did not give that.

Exposes Perfidy

Hon. W. J. Bowser—Wait until I read it; you have not heard it. (Laughter.) "I certainly did not understand that conversations with any of the reporters in regard to the situation generally were in the nature of an interview." That is what he says now. He admits he saw Cowper, his Liberal colleague and a reporter of The Province newspaper, but now he says he did not think it was an interview. He does not deny that he said to Cowper the liquor people can beat off prohibition if they take it into the courts, and allege that the act that passes later on in this session is illegally passed. He proceeds: "The statement in The Province may be a perfectly correct summary of a general conversation. As a matter of fact, I have not read it yet. I simply stated that I did not give an interview to the paper on the matter in question, although the reporter no doubt honestly regarded the conversation to be for publication." Now, Mr. Speaker, is there anything in our charge? Here is the great legal leader telling his Liberal colleagues, he knows it will be put into the paper; he knows it will go around to every hotel man in this country, through his Liberal colleague, by whom it will be said: "Here is Mr. Macdonald, our great constitutional lawyer, says you can beat prohibition by taking it into the courts on the question of the legality of the session of the Parliament which passes it." Do you wonder

that we on this side say there is collusion between the honorable gentlemen opposite and the hotel people of the country?

To Beat Prohibition

I have shown you before that they tried to force dissolution on the 14th; they did so because they knew that this prohibition matter would come up, and that the people would not have the opportunity of saying regarding the act I will bring down later on in this session, whether they will have prohibition or not in this country. I am going to leave it with the temperance people of this country and the fairminded people of this country to judge as to whether the statements we have made are not shown to be proven right up to the hilt, with regard to my friends the Opposition being in collusion with the liquor people of this country.

Mr. Brewster—May I ask the honorable gentleman a question?

The Speaker—Not except in explanation of something he has said.

Mr. Brewster—I wanted to ask him whether or not it was not stated in our interview that the Prohibition Act was non-contentious, and would not be opposed on this side of the House?

Hon. Mr. Bowser—My friend certainly did say it was non-contentious; that he would not vote against it. And he would not do it; no man in public life would dare vote against a Prohibition referendum. But that was on the morning of the 14th of March, and it was afterwards he came back with the onerous terms which I could not accept, that there must be dissolution that night—and that meant that the Prohibition referendum would have to stand a year before it could go to the country—and this would be keeping faith with the liquor people, when they did not have the will of the people registered on election day.

A Collusive Deal

In the general election it would not give the people an opportunity of voting on this bill, and having this bill become law if they voted for it. This, in my opinion, is the strongest evidence of a collusive deal between them and the liquor people to postpone Prohibition as long as they possibly can. (Applause.) Dissolution that night would have also stopped all their proposed investigations, which I am so anxious they should proceed with.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer for a few moments to the financial situation of this country. The Honorable leader of the Opposition has said that our financial situation is very bad; that all our public lands are gone, we have no assets; but they are willing to sacrifice themselves, to walk across the floor of the House, and take an empty treasury, simply for the benefit of the people. Did you ever see such enthusiasm in people to gain power and have an empty treasury, as you find in the rank and file of the Liberal party from one end of this country to the other? But they know that the assets of the country are there; they know the treasury is not empty; and they perhaps more than anybody else know the purposes that lead them on to endeavor to gain power on the right hand of the Speaker. The Honorable leader of the Opposition recently made a trip east; he told a blue ruin story from the time he started until he came back. He was "knocking" British Columbia; he was stating we were a corrupt government; there was nothing good in any of us, that the only people who had at heart the interest of the country were my friends the Opposition; that there was no honesty on this side of the House. But he did not tell them that while the Liberals had the monopoly of honesty what about Saskatchewan and Alberta?

"Knocked" Financial Credit

But I do not want to bring that in on this debate except to show that my friend for political advantage has gone through Eastern Canada at the time we were trying to take up our loan in New York on the 31st of December, and knocked the financial credit of British Columbia. What happened? The people in the East themselves investigated. When I discussed this matter with the financial people of the East they told me if we could succeed in getting a loan for three years at 7 per cent to carry us past the war, we were doing well, because the Anglo-French loan had been floated in New York before, and the underwriters were left with \$180,000,000 of it on their hands, which netted the investor 6.20 per cent; and as to the Canadian domestic loan it was not known whether it would be floated here or go to the financiers of the United States; that naturally that would

have more prestige than the British Columbia loan; that if we floated it for three years we would be doing well. As a matter of fact we floated a loan of ten years, notwithstanding what my friend had said in Eastern Canada, at the exceptionally low rate under the circumstances of 6.39 per cent. Let me compare that with other loans. Mr. White's loan of July, 1915, his one year's cost him 5.75, his two years' cost him 5.62; and the Anglo-French loan cost those two great nations in New York 6 per cent, and when the underwriters were through and found they could not float the whole loan in New York, they found they had \$180,000,000 of the \$500,000,000 on their hands, which was sold in New York at 6.20. If the Anglo-French loan had to be floated at 6 per cent, British Columbia is doing extremely well when she floats hers at 6.39. And so far as our standing is concerned, since we floated our loan, and Mr. White's further loan was floated in Canada, we have been offered money on the agricultural loan at less than 6 per cent. So that the statement which my friend opposite made certainly was not taken very seriously with the people who want to invest money in this Province; our credit is good notwithstanding what he did on his Eastern trip. (Applause.)

Our Financial Standing

Speaking of our financial standing they also say we have no money, that we have no surplus today, that while we had a large amount of money a few years ago, now we have nothing. Now if those people want to be fair they would go to the financial budget for the last few years, to get the figures; let them take the figures for the past five years and study them. They would see that in our sparsely settled country it was necessary to make comparatively large expenditures to provide schools, roads, etc., and in order to provide these facilities it was necessary for us to borrow, and in order to keep up the credit of the country it was necessary for us to sell certain of our assets in the way of timber and lands. Having put our railways through we must put through our lateral roadways and branch roads as well. We had to open the way for the country to produce. We had to spend money and of course re-

duce our surplus in the bank. But any schoolboy knows you cannot show deficits and still have money in the bank, that you must reduce your surplus in the bank if you want to carry on your works. We have shown that condition of financial affairs during these years. But my friends opposite hoped the people of this country were not a reading people, and would not delve into what the financial statements would show. My friends have stated that we are bankrupt, but I can inform them that we have today over \$2,500,000 in the bank. (Applause). I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I said that; my friends and their supporters as soon as they hear there are \$2,500,000 in the bank, the whole rank and file of the Liberal party will be in the City of Victoria before the end of a week. (Laughter.)

Policy of Development

In this connection I wish to say, as a Government we have pursued our policy of development because the people asked us by an almost unanimous vote in the elections, and by the vote before that, in the preceding elections, to go on and develop the country along the lines we have been doing. We are doing it in the ways I have referred to, and we are doing it in the ways we propose now. But we are not perfection. I leave perfection to the Opposition. We are naturally people that make mistakes; and the people in the country make mistakes. And it will be found that the intelligent voter of the country will recognize that perhaps any Government may make mistakes in connection with the handling of the business of the country, especially in the face of such speculative times as we have had during the last few years. (Applause.)

Now just one or two other words on this point. We have, of course, a large guaranteed debt, which the people on two occasions have highly approved—on the last occasion pretty nearly unanimously with the exception of the two members of the Socialist party, who found their way into the House. A part of these guarantees do not affect the credit of this country, because Sir Robert Borden for the Dominion government, put in \$45,000,000, which of course must be protected before our

guarantee could be called upon; and the result is that so far as the Canadian Northern Pacific is concerned there will never be any call for British Columbia to pay on either the principal or interest which they guaranteed.

Pacific Great Eastern

The Pacific Great Eastern is in a different position; but with the Pacific Great Eastern we have a road running through perhaps the most magnificent country which can be developed in British Columbia. And another thing, which must never be forgotten, is that with the Pacific Great Eastern we have the personal covenant of Messrs. Foley, Welch & Stewart also—which we have not in the case of the Canadian Northern Pacific. And as a result, if the worst comes to the worst, we have these men who are well fixed financially; they may at the present time be like everybody else that they have not the amount of money to their credit in the banks that they would like, but there is no question about their resources or assets; and I do not think so far as British Columbia is concerned, that we have the slightest fear in so far as these guarantees are concerned. (Applause.)

Now, what is the debt, so far as the country is concerned? Today, our net debt is \$18,400,000. Let us compare that with the City of Vancouver. The debt of the City of Vancouver is \$35,000,000—twice that of the great Province of British Columbia. The City of Victoria's debt is \$17,000,000—within a million of the Province's debt. The per capita debt of this Province at \$18,400,000, figures out \$40 per capita; the per capita debt of Vancouver is \$200, and of Victoria, \$250.

The Municipal Debt

Now let us take the municipal debt of this Province. This is \$95,000,000, as against the \$18,400,000 of the Province itself. The municipalities have a debt of \$95,000,000, with security covering 1,600 square miles; our \$18,400,000 debt covers 350,000 square miles. Is there any man who says he is afraid of the future of British Columbia in relation to its debt? These figures explain themselves. When you think of the municipalities of this Province owing a debt of \$95,000,000 as against our \$18,400,000, there is nobody here who is

going to suggest for one moment that perhaps the municipalities of this country have gone too far in connection with the debt they have undertaken—in some cases they have gone to a little extravagance, perhaps, but it was the signs of the times, and it was forced upon the councils by the people who elected them. For that action, they could not be blamed, because the people themselves carried the by-laws which made it possible to incur these large debts of the municipalities of the Province.

Now, I do not wish to speak on any other questions suggested in the King's Speech, because I hope to make a statement soon as to what part of our legislative programme will be carried out in its entirety. There are some questions in relation to the returned soldiers, the aid they should receive, that the Government is giving earnest attention to. We are endeavoring to get the views of the other provinces and the Federal Government in connection with the returned soldiers, to see if we cannot work out some common purpose; it is a programme which cannot be worked out hurriedly, but it must be worked out to the advantage of the returned soldiers when they come back. (Applause.)

I have spoken in connection with the Prohibition Bill and the Liquor Act, and I do not propose to carry on any debate on that today, because an opportunity will be given later on. When these

various features of legislation are brought down, they will be discussed individually, rather than in a prolonged speech of this nature.

Optimism—Not Pessimism

Now, I have shown you what the credit of the country is; that it has not been affected by what my friends opposite said, it has not been affected by the depressed times, it has not been affected by the financial conditions engendered by the war. I have shown you what our net debt is as compared with the large cities of the Province, and also of the municipalities. And it seems to me that at this stage of the history of British Columbia we should have to have optimism and not pessimism; it is a time when optimism should be shown on the part of everybody as never before. Our public assets are of such a nature that we do not need to fear about getting along, so long as we do not spend recklessly the money of the country. This is not a time for holding post mortems. "Let the dead past bury its dead." Let us go on in the future with courage, and see what we can do for British Columbia. These pessimistic speeches that my friends have been making, not only on the hustings, but on the floor of this House, do not do any good to this country. We have the natural assets, and all we want is courage to face the future, and then all will be well. (Applause.)